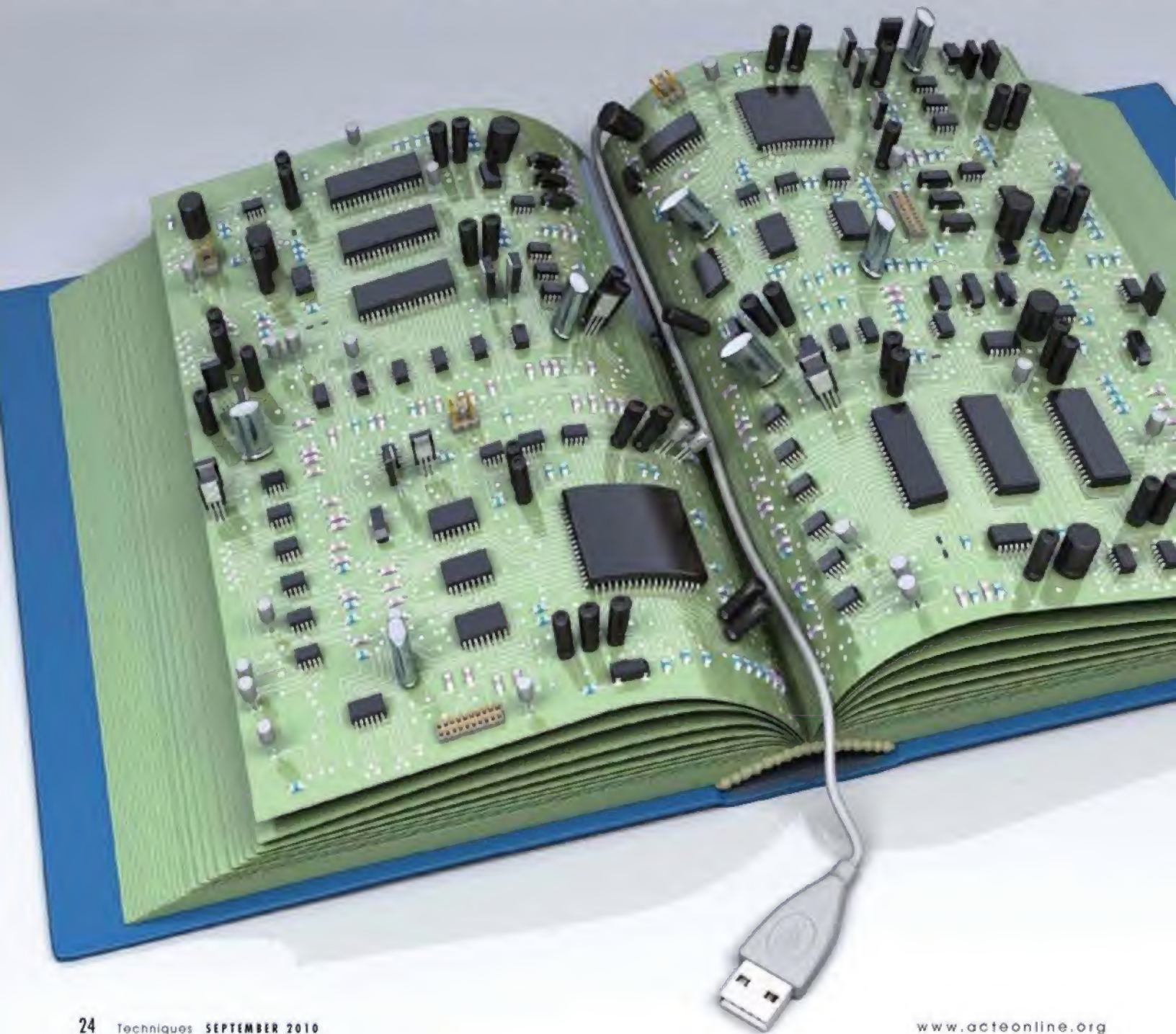# HOW TO
# GO ONLINE

# WITH YOUR CTE COURSES

**BY** LEN BOGNER AND DOROTHY CADY

Online learning has changed all levels of education forever; but then again, education has always been in a state of transition. Distance education has been around for decades; correspondence courses, courses through the radio and television, and interactive video education have created the pathway for online learning. Online learning started in earnest in the mid-1990s. It has now grown to the point that there are thousands of courses being offered from all types of schools; millions of students are enrolled in them all over the world; and students are taking advantage of these opportunities every day. It is estimated that online learning will continue to grow along with the technology.

Teacher education programs have had to change with distance technology. They still devote the majority of their time instructing methods of teaching, curriculum development, evaluation practices and classroom management; but they now have the added challenge of teaching future teachers how to teach online. Some education programs have even gone so far as to add a course focused specifically on using emerging technology to help their candidates understand how to enhance their teaching online. This trend is sure to continue at all levels of education.

## Steps to Convert Your CTE Program Online

1. **Career Clusters:** If you have converted your program to the Career Cluster format, the first step has been done for you—the program is broken into majors and courses. Part of the requirement for Career Clusters is to create a syllabus for each of your courses. It all starts with the syllabus because it creates the outline for what is to be taught. The basic syllabus consists of instructor information, course description, materials (text), goals, objectives, requirement, grading scale, and an outline for the complete course, including activities. The syllabus provides the outline not only for your face-to-face course, but for your online course too.

2. **Create a Course Notebook:** Start with printing out your syllabus; then follow your course outline. If you have not already done so, you need to break your outline up into units of instructions. Think of units as chapters in a book, they are small sections of the bigger story. A unit of instruction typically consists of a lesson plan, readings, PowerPoint, an activity, and an assessment. Use tabs to separate the units in your notebook. The notebook creates a wonderful visual reference for the in-

structor to start thinking about individual instruction.

3. **Learning Activity Packets (LAPs):** LAPs have been used for individual instruction for quite some time. If you have converted your courses for individualized instruction, you are just a quick step away from putting them online. If you have not, use your course notebook to start. Traditionally, LAPs consist of seven parts: a title, a rational, the objectives, the content list, learning activities, a review and an evaluation. Once you have your course in a LAP format, create a new notebook with all of your LAPs in it so that you have a discernible reference for the course. Once you are comfortable with your LAPs, then you are ready to take your course online.

4. **Create the Online Course:** Become aware and comfortable with your learning management system (LMS). Some of the more popular systems include Blackboard/Web CT, Desire to Learn, Moodle, and Angle. Even though they are different software, they all have similar parts, including a course outline, an assignment box, a discussion board, and a grade book. Follow the LAPs notebook and outline and simply insert the materials into

"As CTE educators we do not follow, **WE LEAD;** and online courses are the next step in our evolution."

the learning system. There will always be some challenges in converting your course to an online format; but by following these steps, 95 percent of the work should be done for you.

## Hints on how to Organize and Manage your Online Course

Remember your first day of teaching? How you were excited, nervous and unsure of how the day was going to go? Well that is kind of the same feeling you are going to have with your first online course. Be prepared, but more importantly be patient. If you have done a good job of setting up the course, half the work

has been done for you. However, teaching online is unlike teaching in the classroom because the structure is different. So here are a couple of quick hints to help you organize and manage the online format.

- Pace yourself (online flexibly does not mean you are on call 24-7). Set regular times to be logged on to the course so that students can connect with you at that time. Set deadlines for your students. This a great way to keep organized. It forces your students to have a schedule, and it creates a way for you to see if students are falling behind.

- Provide feedback. This is easy to do in a face-to-face format because we are always providing feedback verbally; for an online course, however, feedback must be provided in a written format, and this takes time. Students cannot improve if you do not provide them with feedback.

### A Success Story

The Database Technologies program at Francis Tuttle Technology Center in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, provides training for students to become database administrators. It was a successful daytime program that addressed an immediate need—recent industry layoffs that left longtime industry professionals with a need to retrain. The Oklahoma City program was successful at preparing laid-off workers for a new career; it also met the immediate need of local businesses for skilled employees with technical expertise

in relational databases. But once that need was filled, the program's enrollment waned, but not for long. The market's need wasn't gone, it was just modified.

The students' need for education in the database area began to change, and so too did the needs of employers. Prospective students were no longer unemployed with daytime hours to fill, but instead were new and experienced professionals working in their field, but wanting additional training and professional certification. That meant they no longer had the flexibility to attend classes during the day, but instead had become nontraditional students requiring an alternative to the standard daytime program. Francis Tuttle first addressed this need by adding an evening program. This offered an alternative to daytime courses, but did not always meet the need for flexibility that professionals in the field often needed.

Valerie Frye, Francis Tuttle's Database Technologies program instructor, suggested an alternative to help meet the needs of these students—putting the program online. After a frantic summer of redesigning the program courses to an online format, and then developing them in the Technology Center's LMS, the program's first completely online career path—Database Administration—was offered. However, to ensure quality and to meet student requirements for certification, just offering the program online was not enough. Frye turned to Oracle and worked with the company to allow Francis Tuttle to offer the program using Oracle-approved curriculum. Students completing the program would then be qualified to take Oracle certification exams.

After being at risk of becoming an obsolete program, the online Database Technologies program emerged, and within a year, became popular enough to ensure the program's continued success. Francis Tuttle Technology Center now offers two career pathways within the Database Technologies program—Database

Administrator and Database Developer.

Online students enrolled in the Francis Tuttle Technology Center Database Administrator pathway are trained to help ensure that company data is accurate, secure, accessible and at the quality level required by the company; Database Developer pathway students, meanwhile, are trained to write, test and maintain company database programs. Students in both pathways learn the skills and develop the technical expertise needed to design and implement, as well as to maintain company relational database systems and applications.

## Looking Ahead

Spurred by the addition of online course development and teaching skills to teacher training programs, the number and quality of online CTE courses has shown tremendous growth and success.

While developing CTE courses online takes time and training, following the advice and guidance in this article can help CTE teachers succeed in moving their courses online. As CTE educators we do not follow, we lead; and online courses are the next step in our evolution. **T**

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Bogner and Cady have recently completed the book *Online Success: The Adult Learner's Guide to Online Classes*, published by Kendall Hunt publishing company.